We use cookies to ensure that we deliver the best user experience of our website. If you would like to, you can change your cookie settings at any time. Continue

Birmingham researchers focus on stemming the obesity tide

Posted on Tuesday 18th October 2011

With obesity rates in India and other parts of the world reaching epidemic levels, academics from the University of Birmingham in the UK are responding to the crisis through a cross-campus centre focused on obesity and obesity-related research.

Although obesity can be tackled through increased exercise and a better diet, for those who are already obese the health consequences are severe. On average, being obese decreases life expectancy by nearly 10 years. In addition, it is associated with dramatically increased risks of developing type 2 diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease and hyperlipidaemia. It has also been suggested that in the not too distant future, obesity could not only become the leading cause of liver failure, but also the leading cause of cancer worldwide.

The mission of the University of Birmingham's Centre for Obesity Research is to understand the factors which contribute to people becoming obese, to track the health outcomes of obesity and close the loop by implementing novel treatment and prevention strategies.

Scientific evidence suggests that being overweight can present more serious health problems for people of South Asian origin compared with other populations. They are predisposed to carrying more fat tissue and develop insulin resistance at very early stages of life leading to high cases of type 2 diabetes. Low levels of physical activity can also exacerbate the onset of the disease.

South Asians make up the largest proportion of Birmingham's minority ethnic groups and 28 per cent of the city's total population are classified as obese. Given the demographics of the city, the University of Birmingham's Centre for Obesity Research is well placed to conduct research to confront the obesity and diabetes epidemic threatening South Asia and the wider world.

Dr Jeremy Tomlinson, Reader in Endocrinology at the University of Birmingham and a Medical Research Council Senior Clinical Fellow, said: "Obesity affects every major organ system in the body and causes not only biological and clinical problems but psychological and social factors as well. Due to this, the centre is founded on a fundamental collaborative, multidisciplinary ethos reflecting the complex nature of cause and consequence."
Areas of research conducted at the Centre include: diabetes, endocrinology, sports and exercise sciences, immunology, psychology, primary care, public health, food engineering, cardiovascular sciences, fertility, cancer research, health economics and education.

The University of Birmingham has a long history of engagement with India and academics from the Centre visited several metro cities earlier this year to foster research collaborations with Indian institutions in the area of obesity and related disciplines.
Professor Anton Wagenmakers, Head of the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences at the University of Birmingham, who participated in the visit, commented: "We are keen to understand how India is tackling these issues and look at how we can work together. We are particularly keen to share our strategies to promote physical activity to counteract the health threats of obesity."

For further information, please visit the Centre for Obesity Research website at: **www.obesity.bham.ac.uk (http://www.obesity.bham.ac.uk/)**

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

• The University of Birmingham was established in 1900 and was the UK's first civic university where students from all religions and backgrounds were accepted on an equal basis. It is one of the United Kingdom's internationally acclaimed research–intensive universities. The University's work brings people from across the world to Birmingham, including researchers and teachers and more than 4,000 international students from nearly 150 different countries.

• The University of Birmingham's engagement with India spans over 100 years. The first Indian students came to Birmingham in 1909 to study degrees in Mining and Commerce and there are now more than 1000 Indian alumni. The University currently has over 180 students from India studying a wide range of subjects – at all levels from foundation to doctoral research.

• The University's India Office opened in New Delhi in 2009. This was the first overseas office of the University of Birmingham and has been established to maintain partnerships with local providers, support the alumni in India, further consolidate research collaborations and provide local services to those students who wish to study at the University.

• For further information please visit: **www.birmingham.ac.uk (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/)**

For media enquiries, please contact Catherine Byerley, International Press and PR Officer,
University of Birmingham, Tel: +44 (0) 121 414 8254 or +44 (0) 7827 832 312,
Email: **c.j.byerley@bham.ac.uk (mailto:c.j.byerley@bham.ac.uk)**

© University of Birmingham 2014